







Reflecting crystal gaze of a culture  
— Rebecca West  
Black and, Grey Falcon  
pg 284

Leclan B. Katterer"  
1944





THE SLEEPING BEAUTY

*By the Same Author*

BUCOLIC COMEDIES



# THE SLEEPING BEAUTY

BY  
EDITH SITWELL



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TO  
OSBERT

WHO ASKED ME TO WRITE THIS

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# THE SLEEPING BEAUTY

## I

WHEN we come to that dark house,  
Never sound of wave shall rouse  
The bird that sings within the blood  
Of those who sleep in that deep wood.  
For in that house the shadows now  
Seem cast by some dark unknown bough.  
The gardener plays his old bagpipe  
To make the melons' gold seeds ripe ;  
The music swoons with a sad sound—  
“ Keep, my lad, to the good safe ground !  
For once, long since, there was a felon  
With guineas gold as the seeds of a melon,  
And he would sail for a far strand  
To seek a waking, clearer land,—  
A land whose name is only heard  
In the strange singing of a bird.  
The sea was sharper than green grass,  
The sailors would not let him pass,  
For the sea was wroth and rose at him  
Like the turreted walls of Jerusalem,

Or like the towers and gables seen  
Within a deep-boughed garden green.  
And the sailors bound and threw him down  
Among those wrathful towers to drown.  
And oh, far best," the gardener said,  
" Like fruits to lie in your kind bed,—  
To sleep as snug as in the grave  
In your kind bed, and shun the wave,  
Nor ever sigh for a strange land  
And songs no heart can understand."

I hunted with the country gentlemen  
Who, seeing Psyche fly, thought her a hen

And aimed at her ; the mocking wingèd one  
Laughed at their wingless state, their  
crooked gun.

Then on the water—green and jewelled leaves  
Hiding ripe fruitage, every sportsman grieves,

Sitting and grumbling in their flat boat  
edged  
With the soft feathers of the foam, scarce  
fledged.



But I will seek again the palace in the wood,  
Where never bird shall rouse our sleepy blood

Within the bear-dark forests, far beyond  
This hopeless hunting, or Time's sleepy  
bond.

The gardener was old as tongues of nightin-  
gales

That in the wide leaves tell a thousand  
Grecian tales

And sleep in golden nets of summer light.

"Sweet fig," he called me, and would stay  
the flight

Of plums that seemed Jove's golden-feathered  
rain.

Then birds like Fortunatus moved again

Among the boughs with silent feathered  
feet,—

Spraying down dew like jewels amid the sweet

Green darkness ; figs, each like a purse of  
gold,

Grow among leaves like rippled water green  
and cold.

“ Beneath those laden boughs,” the gardener  
sighs,  
“ Dreaming in endlessness, forgotten beauty  
lies.

Long since, a wandering and airy nymph  
She seemed, when the bright ladies of the  
court  
Came like the sylvan equipage Dian  
Leads in her hunting through the deepest  
woods  
And the Dodonian leaves of summer ; only  
now  
We see them smile, an echo through dim  
leaves.”

Thus spoke the ancient man, wrinkled like  
old moonlight  
Beneath dark boughs. Time dreamed away  
to night,  
And while I heard the leaves like silver  
cymbals ring  
He told me this old tale of Beauty’s mournful  
christening :—



Oh the pomp that passed those doors ;  
Trains still sweep the empty floors,  
Pelongs, bulchauls, pallampores,

Soundless now as any breeze  
Of amber and of orangeries  
That sweep from isles in Indian seas ;

While in the floating and mysterious leaves  
A silver sound like some forgotten music  
grieves.

The fairies all received an invitation,  
Ordered their sedan-chairs with great elation,

Their richest trains, their plumes, and their  
bright trumps  
Like silver fruits that from dark branches  
grow in clumps.

The fays descend from each dark palanquin  
With fanfares and with lute sounds, walk  
within

The shade ; there, smiling dim as satyr-broods  
Hornèd as moons, that haunt our deepest  
woods,

Are country gentlemen, so countrified  
That in their rustic grace they try to hide

Their fingers sprouting into leaves ; we see  
Them sweet as cherries growing from a tree—

All fire and snow ; they grow and never move,  
Each in the grace of his Pan-haunted grove.

“ Her mouth,” the first fay said, “ as fair  
    shall be  
As any gentle ripe red strawberry

That grows among the thickest silver leaves ;  
Her locks shall be as blonde as these—the eve’s

Great winds of beauty, fleeces from those  
    flocks  
That Dian tends in her deep woods, those  
    locks

Shall seem.” The second fairy said,  
“ Blessings like dew fall on her lovely head !

For lovely as the cherubim’s soft breath  
Or Leda’s love, whose cold melodious death



Is heavenly music to the sad world lost,  
Her skin shall be, as fair as silver frost."

But now within the dark shade of a deep-  
dreaming tree  
A darker shade and panoply we see ;

Drowning the soft sound of the plashing lute  
A great fanfare is heard, like unripe silver  
fruit.

" Who is this now who comes ? " Dark words  
reply and swoon  
Through all the high cold arbours of the  
moon :

" The slighted Laidronette, the unbidden  
fay,  
Princess of the Pagodas. . . . Shades, make  
way ! "

The sedan-chair that hides her shade is  
mellow  
As the trees' great fruit-jewels glittering  
yellow,

And round it the old turbanned ladies flock  
Like apes that try to pluck an apricock.

The little fawning airs are trembling wan ;  
And silver as fair Leda's love the swan

The moonlight seems ; the apricocks have  
turned to amber,  
Cold as from the bright nymph Thetis'  
chamber,

And far away, the fountains sigh forlorn  
As waving rustling sheaves of silver corn.

The wicked fay descended, mopping, mowing  
In her wide-hooped petticoat, her water-  
flowing

Brightly-perfumed silks. . . . " Ah ha, I  
see

You have remembered all the fays but me ! "

(She whipped her panthers, golden as the  
shade  
Of afternoon in some deep forest glade.)

“ I am very cross because I am old,  
And my tales are told  
And my flames jewel-cold.

I will make your bright birds scream  
I will darken your jewelled dream,  
I will spoil your thickest cream,

I will turn the cream sour,  
I will darken the bower,  
I will look through the darkest shadows and  
lour,—

And sleep as dark as the shade of a tree  
Shall cover you. . . . Don't answer me !  
For if the Princess prick her finger  
Upon a spindle, then she shall be lost  
As a child wandering in a glade of thorn  
With sleep like roses blowing soft, forlorn,  
Upon each bough. This, madam, is the cost  
Of your dark rudeness. But I will not linger.”

And with a dark dream's pomp and panoply  
She swept out with her train ; the soft  
sounds die  
Of plumaged revelry bright as her train  
Of courtiers ; and all was night again.



Then through the deepest shades went  
Laidronette,  
Princess of the Pagodas ; in a pet  
She left the domes, like rich and turbanned  
fruits  
In the great gardens, and she left the lutes ;  
  
Back to her palace in her great sedan  
She floats ; world turn to snow before her  
fan—  
She sweeps through the dark woods to her  
vast palace  
Where now, at last, she can unleash her  
malice.

There in her room, an amber orange burned  
On the Hesperides' dark trees and spurned  
By that gold-peruked conqueror the Sun—  
An Alexander whence plumed rivers run

Fearing his fierceness, Ethiopian shapes  
The heat had kissed, with lips like burning  
grapes,  
Unwigged her for the night, while her apes  
beg  
That she will leave uncurtained that Roc's  
egg

Her head, a mount of diamonds bald and big  
In the ostrich feathers that compose her wig.  
Her dwarfs as round as oranges of amber  
Among the tall trees of the shadow clamber

And in Night's deep domain she monstrous  
lies

With every little wicked dream that flies  
And crawls ; with old Bacchantes black with  
wine,

Whose very hair has changed into a vine,

And ancient satyrs whose wry wig of roses  
Nothing but little rotting shames discloses.  
They lie where shadows, cold as the night  
breeze,

Seem cast by rocks, and never by kind trees.

## II

NEXT dawn, the ancient chamberlain  
Came like someone who has lain

For years beneath the deepest water. . . .  
He called the housekeeper's young daughter

Where she sat in her bedgown  
Smoothing the dusky dawn's owl-down,

Until she leaned out through the wet  
Leaves in her pale sarcenet.

“ Forget the dawn is still owl-dark,  
Forget the wet leaves . . . you must hark :

Owing to the fairy's malice,  
No spindles must be in the palace.”

In their dark leaf-hid bower the maidens  
chatter like a bird  
Awakening : “ Phœbe, Audrey, have you  
heard ?

Oh, the dark panic here this very night,  
The slighted fairy's anger and our good  
queen's fright,



And all our spindles banished ! it would seem  
That we have naught to do all day but  
dream ! ”

When the dew seems like trembling silver  
leaves,  
Cross Poll Troy looks out through the palace  
eaves. . . .

“ Knot up your butter-yellow satin hair,  
You lazy queans. . . . Come quick ! come  
down the stair !

Anne, Anne,  
Come draw the milk !  
The cream must be as thick as silk  
And yellow as the ripest sheen  
Of apricock or nectarine.  
Beneath the great leaves of that tree  
Wicked Goat-foot I can see !  
He'll steal the milk and steal the cream  
While you lie in a lazy dream.  
Fie, the lazy birds, the shames !  
Phœbe, you must light the flames ;  
They will spring like greenest leaves  
Growing round your bower's dim eaves.

Oh the foliage shrill and green  
In the fire ! you lazy quean,  
Dream not of your heart's desire,—  
Phœbe, come and light the fire ! ”

### III

THEN through the broad green leaves the  
gardener came  
With a basket filled with honeyed fruits of  
dawn  
Plucked from the thickest leaves. They  
heard him sing  
As he walked where that pillared avenue  
Of tall clear-fruited ripe trees grew  
(For so the Palace seemed) ; and sweet  
His song fled, soft as wind and fleet :

“ Now the dawn, lights seem  
Ripe yellow fruits in a dream  
Among the great green leaves  
Of dawn and rustling sheaves.

The vast sun's rays like sheaves of wheat  
Are gold and dry,  
All bound together, growing yet—  
An early offering. I

Heard the old King's lullabies  
That his nurse the South Wind sighs  
As she heaps the honeycombs  
Where he lies ; the fruit-ripe domes





#### IV

Do, do,  
Princess, do,  
The fairy Chatte Blanche rocks you slow.  
Like baskets of white fruit or pearls  
Are the fairy's tumbling curls,—  
Or lattices of roses white  
Wherethrough the snows like doves take  
flight.

Do, do,  
Princess, do,  
How furred and white is the fallen snow.

Do, do,  
Princess, do,  
Like singing blackbirds are the eyes  
Of the fairy old and wise.  
A honeyed tune, the crystal drops  
Of rain that falls and never stops  
From flowers as white as seraphims'  
Breath no winter ever dims. . . .

Do, do,  
Princess, do,  
Like birds that peck fruit sweet and shrill  
With painted bill,  
Flies down the snow.

The angels came with footsteps light,  
They brushed her hair to make it bright,  
They taught her to be sweet and wise  
With kisses faint as butterflies.

They said, " When you go up to heaven  
The nursery clock shall ne'er strike seven.  
Your boudoir shall be of white satin,  
You shall not say your prayers in Latin—  
But you shall dance a minuet  
On heaven's floors ; frizzed mignonette  
Shall seem your curls, of heaven's flowers  
Most fair ; and you shall sit in bowers

Of honeysuckle sweet as those pink fires  
Whereby the angels dry their locks upon the  
lights' gold wires."

And when the Queen called for her child,  
they brought  
Only her image, formed to please the  
Court. . . .

An old man with a gardener's hat and red  
Poll-parrot nose brought her a tiny bed



Whereon lies folded a small poppet rose  
That in her dark leaves like a little babe lies  
close.

For after Laidronette's wild rage was spent,  
The chamberlain to the child's nursery went

And sped her far away, like the East Wind,  
To worlds of snow, far from the fairy's mind.

And there the Princess stayed till she was  
weaned  
From milk of doves ; then o'er the snow  
bright-preened

By its sharp bill the wind, the chamberlain  
Whisked the Princess back to the Court again.

## V

BUT the Dowager Queen shook her old head :  
 “ The rose, the peach, and the quince-flower  
     red

And the strawberry flower in the snows are  
     dead.

If none of the rose-tribe can survive  
 The snow, then how can our poppet live ? ”

And in her gown of quilted satin,  
 As red as quince-flowers, she reads Latin  
 Missals to the peaches that grow  
 Gilded with suns, then fade like snow ;

They lie in the nets of dew at leisure.  
 And this is now her only pleasure—  
 This and her parrot long ago  
 Dead,—but none dared tell her so,

And therefore the bird was stuffed and  
     restored  
 To lifeless immortality ; bored  
 It seemed, but yet it remained her own ;  
 And she never knew the bird's soul had  
     flown.

And so indeed seemed Destiny,—  
A bird fine-feathered, fair to see  
In spite of its condor-wings, fierce beak,  
And hooded eyes. . . . Grown old and  
weak,

Imprisoned now in a gilded cage  
In her powder-closet, far from the rage  
Of winter, it can only sing  
Roulades and preen its bright clipped wing

Upon her perfumed dressing table  
In a cage with a foolish bell-hung gable,  
Beneath the portrait of dead Queen Anne  
(Whose life was the sweet air blown from a  
fan),

'Midst brightly perfumed water-flowing  
Eighteenth-century silks where growing  
Strawberry flowers of the frail frost  
Upon the diamond-panes are lost.

## VI

AT Easter when red lacquer buds sound far  
slow

Quarter-tones for the old dead Mikado,

Through avenues of lime trees, where the  
wind

Sounds like a chapeau chinois, shrill,  
unkind,—

The Dowager Queen, a curling Korin wave  
That flows for ever past a coral cave

With Dido Queen of Carthage slowly drives  
(Her griffin dog that has a thousand lives)

Upon the flat-pearled and fantastic shore  
Where curled and turbanned waves sigh  
“Nevermore,”

And she is sunk beneath a clear still lake  
Of sleep,—so frail with age she cannot  
wake. . . .

A strange horizon and a soundless sea  
Must separate wise age from you and me—



They watch life's movements ripening like  
fruit  
And sigh, knowing the gnarled and twisted  
root.

O people building castles on the sand  
And taking one another by the hand,

What do you find within each other's eyes ?—  
What wisdom unknown of the lonely wise ?—

The promise of what spring, the certainty  
Of what eternal life to come,—what lie ?

Only the sound of Time's small muffled drum,  
The sound of footsteps that will never come,

And little marches all beribboned gay  
That lead down the lime avenues away

To the dark grave . . . we for a little weep,  
Then pray a little, sinking into sleep.

How far is this wise age from the bright  
youth  
Of Princess Cydalise, a warm wind from the  
south ?

## VII

IN the great nursery where the poppet maids  
Seem small round fruits that grow in leafy  
glades,

The Princess grew in beauty till she seemed  
That gentle maid of whom Endymion  
dreamed.

And in those evenings when the lovely moon  
Shone through the smiling woods of deepest  
June,

Then through the curtains she would play  
“ Bo-Peep ”  
With fleecy lamb-tailed clouds, when she  
should sleep.

Sometimes the moon would sing her ancient  
songs  
Of lovely ladies and forgotten wrongs ;

And once she whispered that within the  
wood  
An ancient satyr, wiser than the brood

From which he sprang, within a cloudy cave  
Teaches philosophies both old and grave.

The Princess said, “ With my light step I  
will be gone  
To peep within that far cave—but alone ! ”

Yet in the darkness, her gazelle-light foot-  
steps ran  
Far from the cave of that wise satyr-man.

## VIII

IN the great gardens, after bright spring rain,  
We find sweet innocence come once again,  
White periwinkles, little pensionnaires  
With muslin gowns and shy and candid airs,

That under saint-blue skies with gold stars  
sown

Hide their sweet innocence by spring winds  
blown,

From zephyr libertines that like Richelieu  
And d'Orsay their gold-spangled kisses blew ;

And lilies of the valley whose buds blonde and  
tight

Seem curls of little school-children that light  
The priests' procession, when on some saint's  
day

Along the country paths they make their way.

Forget-me-nots, whose eyes of childish blue,  
Gold-starred like heaven, speak of love still  
true ;

And all the flowers that we call " dear heart,"  
Who say their prayers like children, then  
depart



Into the dark. Amid the dew's bright beams  
The summer airs like Weber waltzes fall  
Round the first rose who flushed with her  
youth seems  
Like young Princesses dressed for their first  
ball:

Who knows what beauty ripens from dark  
mould  
After the sad wind and the winter's cold?—  
But a small wind sighed, colder than the rose  
Blooming in desolation, "No one knows."

## IX

THE Princess was young as the innocent  
flowers

That bloom and love through the bright  
spring hours.

Sometimes she crept through locked doors to  
annoy

The palace housekeeper, cross Mrs. Troy,  
Who kept all the whimpering sad ghosts  
locked

In a cupboard, was grieved and faintly  
shocked

If the Princess Jehanne, long since dead,  
Whose hair was of costly long gold thread,  
Would slip her flat body, like a gleaming  
Quivering fish in a clear pool dreaming,  
Through the deep mesh of a conversation,  
Making some ghostly imputation ;—

Or if she frightened the maids till they wince  
By stealing a withered gold-crowned quince  
Wherewith they make preserves ; in the  
gloom

She seems, as she glimmers round the room,  
Like a lovely milk-white unicorn  
In a forestial thicket of thorn.

Life was so still, so clear, that to wake  
Under a kingfisher's limpid lake  
In the lovely afternoon of a dream  
Would not remote or stranger seem.  
Everything seemed so clear for a while—  
The turn of a head or a deep-seen smile,  
Then a smile seen through wide leaves or  
    deep water,  
That beauty seemed to the King's daughter ;  
For a flying shadow passed, then gone  
Was the gleam, and the Princess was alone.

How sweet seemed the flowers of spring  
    again—  
As pink as Susan and Polly and Jane,  
Like country maids so sweet and shy  
Who bloom and love and wonder not why :  
Now when summer comes it seems the  
    door  
To the graves that lie under the trivial floor,  
And the gardens hard to touch and shining,  
Where no mirage dew lies whining.  
And the sweet flowers seem for a fading while  
Dear as our first love's youthful smile,—  
Till they bruise and wound the heart and sense  
With their lost and terrible innocence.

## X

WHEN each clear raindrop holds for flight  
A wingless world all plumage-bright

Like crystal-clear wysteria,  
After the storm's hysteria,

The Princess visited the farm  
Where all the beasts lie, furred as palm

That on the budding Easter boughs  
Among the winds of beauty grows.

The farm-pond, fruitish-soft and ripe,  
Was smooth as a daguerreotype ;

The farm-maid, Rosa, under flimsy  
Muslin skies, an angel's whimsy,

Walked. . . . Her daisy-frillèd frock  
Was stiff and harder than a rock,

Frills touch her feet, like plants foam down ;  
Her wooden trellised hair is brown.

The grass is furry as a bear  
With heat ; the donkey's panniers flare



With fruits whose clear complexions waxen  
Hide in leaves all hairy-flaxen.

And from the sky, white angels lean  
To stroke poor Dobbin's palm-furred skin,

And pluck from the round leaves the pink  
Schoolgirlish summer fruits that wink—

Giggle insipidly. On winding  
Roads whose dust seems gilded binding

Made for "Paul et Virginie"—  
(So flimsy-tough those roads are), see

The panniered donkey pass. The ass's  
Thoughts as through the dust he passes

Where leaves seem parasols of gauze  
Shading the striped wooden floors,

Seem like this : "When long ago  
I worked for Balaam, never so

Appeared an angel ! times are stranger .  
Now," and turning to his manger

He longs, for loads have made him weary,  
For gentian stars, all rough and hairy,

And trees that bear white satin streamers  
Of lovely flowers to please poor dreamers.

The Princess passed goats gold as wheat  
With a kind white milky bleat,

Under the wide leaves mild as milk ;  
The billowing pigs with ears of silk ;

Maternal cows with a white horn  
As hard and dry as rustling corn—

All the poor shadows cast by our sad earthly  
dress  
Of faults and virtues, wavering childishness !

## XI

WHEN we were young, how beautiful life  
seemed!—

The boundless bright horizons that we  
dreamed,

And the immortal music of the Day and  
Night

Leaving the echo of their wonder and their  
might

Deep in our hearts and minds. How could  
the dust

Of superstitions taught in schoolrooms, lust

In love's shape, dim our beauty? What  
dark lie

Or cruelty's voice, could drown this God-  
made harmony?

For we knew naught of prison-worlds man  
built

Around us that we may not know man's  
guilt,—

The endless vistas of the goatish faces  
Echoing each other, and the basis

Of clay, the plumeless wings of Destiny,  
The vistas leading only to the grave where  
we must lie.

. . . . .  
Then all the beauty of the world lay deep  
Mirrored within the beauty water-clear  
Of flowering boughs ; Helen and Deirdre  
dreamed

And fading, wakened in that loveliness  
Of watery branches. In that dead wild  
spring

Through the bird's shaken voice we heard  
God sing.

But age has dimmed our innocent paradise  
With a faint shadow, shaken dust within  
our eyes,—

And we are one now with the lonely wise,  
Knowing the spring is only the clear mirage  
Of an eternal beauty that is not.

Those were the days when the fleet summer  
seemed

The warmth and infinite loveliness of God,  
Who cared for us, within a childish heaven.  
We could believe then ! Oh the lips and eyes  
That spoke of some far undimmed paradise !  
Those were the days. . . .



## XII

Now that the summer only seems the sad  
Mechanical dull action of the light  
And shadow playing over a dead world—  
Dead as my heart—it seems too long ago  
For the remembrance of the beauty and the  
world we used to know.

When the warm lights of afternoon were  
mellow

As honeyed yellow pears, the Princess played  
At Troy Town in the palace garden, tossed  
And through the smiling leaves of summer  
lost

Around compact gold ball, the smaller image  
Of this hard world, grown dry of any love,—  
Or walked upon the shore, watched the  
fantastic

Arabesque, the horsemanship of waves.

“Mademoiselle Fantoche, where do they  
go?”

A faint cold wind replied, “I do not know.”

### THE PRINCESS

“Upon the infinite shore by the sea  
The lovely ladies are walking like birds.

Their gowns have the beauty, the feathery  
Grace of a bird's soft raiment ; remote  
Is their grace and their distinction,—they  
float

And peck at their deep and honeyed words  
As though they were honeyed fruits ; and  
this

Is ever their life, between sleep and bliss.  
Though they are winged for enchanted flight,  
They yet remain ever upon the shore  
Of Eternity, seeking for nothing more,  
Until the cold airs dull their beauty  
And the snows of winter load those dazzling  
Wings, and no bird-throat can sing ! ”

#### THE GOVERNANTE

“ Look not on the infinite wave,  
Dream not of the siren cave,  
Nor hear the cold wind in the tree  
Sigh of worlds we cannot see.

*(Sings)*

The hot muscatelle  
Siesta time fell,  
And the Spanish belle  
Looked out through her shutters.

Under the eglantine  
Thorny and lean  
A shadow was playing a mandoline, mutters

Only this : ‘ Wave  
Your fan . . . siren cave  
Never was cold as the wind from the grave.’

The governante  
Came walking andante,—  
Sailed like a brigantine, black of brow.

And the falconette  
Who danced a ballette  
Sang on the pretty, the brunette bough :

‘ The ambassade  
Of shadows invade  
Death’s most ultimate, peaceful shade. . . .  
Lovely lady, where are you now ? ’

. . . . .  
Come, Madam, you must eat your creamy  
curd,

Soft as the plumage of a bird,—

Break through the jewelled branches’ bird-  
soft gloom

And find Malinn within the cool still-room.”

### XIII

WHERE reynard-haired Malinn  
Walks by rock and cave,  
The Sun, a Chinese mandarin,  
Came dripping from the wave.

“ Your hair seems like the sunrise  
O'er Persia and Cathay—  
A rose-red music strange and dim  
As th' embalmèd smile of seraphim,”

He said to her by the white wave  
In the water-pallid day  
(A forest of white coral boughs  
Seemed the delicate sea-spray) :

“ In envy of your brighter hair,—  
Since, Madam, we must quarrel,—  
I've changed the cold flower-lovely spray  
To branches of white coral.

And when, white muslin madam, you  
Coquette with the bright wind,  
I shall be but thin rose-dust,  
He will be cold, unkind.”



The flowers that bud like rain and dream  
On thin boughs water-clear,  
Fade away like a lovely music  
Nobody will hear,

And Eolus and Boreas  
Brood among those boughs  
Like hermits haunting the dark caves  
None but the wise man knows.

But Malinn's reynard-coloured hair  
Amid the world grown sere  
Still seemed the Javanese sunrise  
Whose wandering music will surprise  
Into cold bird-chattering cries  
The Emperor of China  
Lying on his bier.

## XIV

THE birds, strange flashing glints of another  
life

Peck at the fruits of summer, that too soon  
Will fade into a little gilded dust.

Then underneath the dancing, glancing  
bough

Came Malinn, with her round cheeks dyed as  
pink

As the insipid empty-tasting fruits  
Of summer giggling through the rounded  
leaves.

Outside the stillroom was a cherry tree,  
And through the dancing shadows she could  
see

Cross ancient Poll Troy come to do her  
duty. . . .

She had a cold frost-bitten beauty  
Like blue moonlight smooth and cold  
As amber ; with her trembling old  
Hands she tied the boughs aloft  
Through the air all creamy soft ;  
Then on the sill of the woodland dairy,  
Moving as quick and light as a fairy,

She put a bowl of the thickest cream  
(As thick as chestnut flowers in a dream).  
The gossiping naiad of the water,  
In her sprigged gown like the housekeeper's  
    daughter,  
Giggles outside the stillroom ; she  
Plucks at the thick-bustled cherry tree.  
And Poll is cross ; she chases cherried  
Country maids like thickest-berried  
Cherry trees in their ruched gown  
Till they run from the palace, down,  
Like the sprigged muslin waterfalls  
Of this clear country, to where calls  
Pan, with his satyrs on the rocks  
Feeding their wave-weary flocks.  
The naiad's giggling irritates  
Cross Poll Troy till at last she rates  
Her through the thick-leaved cherry  
    tree :

“ My eyes are dim,—I yet can see  
You, lazy quean ! Go work ! ” “ I can't.”  
“ I say you shall ! ” “ I say I shan't ! ”  
“ But when the airs are creamy soft  
And candle-flames are quince flowers, oft  
Though my heart flutters like a bird  
All dream-dark, though as soft as curd

The moonlight seems still, from my bed  
I rise and work, you sleepy head !  
Though I am dim and very old,  
I wake the flames all jewel-cold,  
The flames that seem, when they soar high,  
Like waterfalls of jewels ; you sigh,  
While I, Miss, churn and make the curd,"  
Piped Poll Troy like a small cross bird,  
Then shuts the stillroom window, goes, for she  
Still hears the naiad giggling through the  
tree.

But Malinn stays where the deep fire's red  
flowers  
Should be as sweet and red as hawthorn  
bowers.

*(Sings)*

" The purring fire has a bear's dull fur,  
Its warmth is sticky, dark as a burr. . . .  
Come drowse, for now there is no eye  
To watch, no voice to ask me why !  
All night I hear my animal blood  
Cry to my youth, ' Come to the wood ' . . .  
But Darkness lumbers like a bear,  
Grumbling, cumbers floor and stair. . . .



And on the eightieth step, I know  
That on the moon's green lichen stain  
I'll slip . . . and his dark breath will blow  
My light out. . . . All will be still again ! ”

She cried out to the naiad : “ I have torn  
My flimsy dress upon a thicket's thorn ;  
The petal of a briar-rose lies forlorn  
Upon it.” Through the glinting leaves  
about the dairy  
Appeared the cream-smug face of the wicked  
fairy. . . .

“ You've torn your dress, my poppet. . . .

I'll come in. . . .

I've brought my spindle with me and I'll spin  
A dress for you. . . .

Such grey-blue sleeves  
Of muslin, like the wind of eve's.  
It shall have frills that flare like leaves.

The ribbons shall be preened,  
Quilled prettily and sheened  
As when the courtier wind plays with a flock  
Of birds for battledore and shuttlecock—  
Whose feathers stream like ribbons. I will hide  
A jewel within each one : you'll seem a bride

For Ariel or some rich water-god. . . .

Come, spin ! ”

Malinn looked through the leaves. . . .

“ Ma’am, please come in ! ”

Far off, the Martha-coloured scabious  
Grew among dust as dry as old Eusebius,

And underneath the cotton-nightcap trees  
Wanders a little cold pig-snouted breeze.

Then in a gown all frilled with foliage like  
hell’s fires  
And quilled like nests of cockatrices, with the  
light’s gold wires

Sewing it stiff, old Laidronette the fairy  
Crept through the window of the woodland  
dairy.

Butter and cream  
Turn hard as a jewel,  
The shrill flames scream,  
The leaves mutter “ cruel.”

Through the dark jewelled leaves  
See the Princess peep  
As lovely as eve's  
Soft wind of sleep.

She picks up the spindle. "Oh, the curious  
bliss ! . . .  
. . . It pricks my finger now. How strange  
this is,—  
For I am like that lovely fawn-queen dead  
Long since,—pierced through the pool-clear  
heart," she said.

Her room now seems like some pale cave  
Haunted by a goatish wave.

Through the curtains—waves of water—  
Comes the housekeeper's young daughter

Where like coral-branches seem  
The candles' light, the candles' gleam.

"Does Echo mourn her lost love there ?"  
Echo is a courtly air

Sighing the name of Cydalise  
Beside clear pools of sleep ; she sees

Her like a nymph in some deep grot  
(Where the wave whispers not)

Like a rose-bush in that cave  
Haunted by a goatish wave.



XV

Do, do,  
Princess, do,  
Like a tree that drips with gold you flow  
With beauty ripening very slow.  
Soon beneath that peaceful shade  
The whole world dreaming will be laid.  
Do, do,  
Princess, do,  
The years like soft winds come and go.

Do, do,  
Princess, do,  
How river-thick flow your fleeced locks  
Like the nymphs' music o'er the rocks. . . .  
From satyr-haunted caverns drip  
These lovely airs on brow and lip.  
Do, do,  
Princess, do,  
Like a tree that drips with gold you flow.

## XVI

BUT far from snow-soft sleep, the country  
Fair

Spangled like planets the bucolic air  
Under hot Capricorn, with gold goat-legs,  
Rough satyr hands, that in the sunburnt hay  
Pulled the long wind-blown hair of Susans,  
Megs,  
And under great trees dark as water lay.

It seemed a low-hung country of the blind,—  
A sensual touch upon the heart and mind.  
Like crazy creaking chalets hanging low  
From the dark hairiness of bestial skies  
The clouds seem, like a potting-shed where  
grow

The flower-like planets for the gay flower-  
show :

Gold-freckled calceolarias,  
Marigolds, cinerarias,  
African marigolds coarse-frilled  
And cherries, apricots, all chilled  
With dew, for thus the bright stars seemed  
To cottage windows where none dreamed.  
But country gentlemen who from their birth  
Like kind red strawberries root deep in earth

And sleep as in the grave, dream far beyond  
The sensual aspects of the hairy sky  
That something hides, they have forgotten  
why!

And so they wander, aiming with their gun  
At mocking feathered creatures that have  
learnt

That movement is but groping into life,—  
Under rough trees like shepherds' goatish  
tents.

And only Midsummer's wide country Fair  
Seems to them heaven and hell and earth and  
air.

The people ride in roundabouts ; their hair  
Is like the gardens of the Pleiades  
Or the first impulse from which music  
sprung  
And the dark sound in the smooth growth of  
trees.

They sparkle like the sea ; their love is young  
For ever, they are golden as the boy  
Who gave an apple smoother than the breeze  
To lady Venus lovely as the seas.  
Their lips are like the gold fires burning Troy.

Like harsh and crackling rags of laughter  
seems

The music, bright flung as an angel's hair—  
Yet awful as the ultimate despair  
Of angels and of devils. . . . Something  
dreams

Within the sound that shrieks both high and  
low

Like some ventriloquist's bright-painted  
show

On green grass, shrill as anger, dulled as  
hate :

It shrieks to the dulled soul, " Too late, too  
late ! "

Sometimes it jangles thin as the sharp wires  
Whereon the poor half-human puppets move;  
Sometimes it flares in foliage like hell's  
fires,

Or whispers insincerities for love.

A little hurdy-gurdy valse sounds hollow  
And bright-husked as the hearts of passing  
people,

Whose talk is only of the growth of plums  
And pears : " Life goes, Death never comes,"  
They sigh, while the bright music like a wave  
Sings of far lands and many a siren cave.



And there are terrible and quick drum-taps  
That seem the anguished beat of our own  
heart

Making an endless battle without hope  
Against materialism and the world.  
And sometimes terrible lumbering Darkness  
comes

Breaking the trivial matchboard floors that  
hide

From us the Dead we dare not look upon :  
O childish eyes, O cold and murdered face—  
Dead innocence and youth that were our  
own !

But age has brought a little subtle change  
Like the withdrawal caused by the slow  
dropping  
Of cold sad water on some vast stone  
image :

A slow withdrawal, a sad, gradual change  
O'er tragic masks through which strange gods  
have cried—

Till seen through death-cold rents in  
saturnine leaves

They seem, almost, to echo in their form  
The saturnine cold laughter of the water.

And this, too, is the fate of country masks  
Of Comedy, as fresh as smiling fruits  
Of summer seen vermilion through deep  
leaves.

Now from the countrysides where people  
know  
That Destiny is wingless and bemired,  
With feathers dirty as a hen's, too tired  
To fly—where old pig-snouted Darkness  
grovels  
For life's mired rags among the broken  
hovels—  
The country bumpkins come, with faces  
round  
And pink as summer fruits, with hair as  
gold  
Sharp-pointed as the summer sun (that old  
Bucolic mime, whose laughing pantomime  
Is rearing pink fruits from the sharp white  
rime).  
They come from little rooms, each a poor  
booth  
(Seen through the summer leaves, all smiling  
smooth).

There, for all beauty, is the badly painted  
Ancestral portrait of their grey-beard God.  
In that poor clownish booth it is so cold  
That small airs prick like grass, a wooden  
sword.

They pass along the country roads as thick  
With walls and gardens as a childish heaven,  
Where all the flowers seem a pink fleshly  
heart  
And mirage dew sigh, "We will never  
part."

And there are young Princesses at each inn  
And poor young people poverty makes wise,  
With eyes like maps of the wide summer  
heaven.

And on the country roads there is a shrine  
As blue and sparkling as the sea-god's wine  
For country gods and goddesses of gardens  
Where every fruit and flower to old songs  
hardens :

Pomona, tinsel-pink as that bright pear  
The moon—she seems a poor bucolic clown  
With dry and gilded foliage for her hair,—  
Where branches cast a shallow melancholy,  
An owl-soft shadow falling over folly.

The pink schoolgirlish fruits hang in bright  
sheaves

Between the rounded and the negroid  
leaves. . . .

And we remember nursery afternoons  
When the small music-box of the sweet snow  
Gave half-forgotten tunes, and our nurse  
told

Us tales that fell with the same tinkling  
notes. . . .

“Once on a time,” she said, “and long ago.”  
Her voice was sweet as the bright-sparkling  
rime,

The fruits are cold as that sweet music’s  
time—

Yet all those fruits like the bright snow will  
fade.

The country bumpkins travel to the Fair,  
For Night and Day and Hell and Heaven  
seem

Only a clown’s booth seen in some bad dream,  
Wherefrom we watch the movements of our  
life

Growing and ripening like summer fruits  
And dwindling into dust, a mirage lie :

Hell is no vastness, it has naught to keep  
But little rotting souls and a small sleep.

It has the same bright-coloured clarity we  
knew

In nursery afternoons so long ago,  
Bright as our childish dreams ; but we are  
old,

This is a different world ; the snow lies cold  
Upon our heart, though midsummer is  
here. . . .



## XVII

BUT in the Court, the little people know  
That Sleep is bright as fruit, and soft as snow.

The sunlight seems like warm brocade  
In the courtyard, through the great arcade ;

And golden as a Sultan's turban  
The ripened medlars hang ; the urban

Maids of the ladies at the palace  
Talked like birds, with a gentle malice,

And on the wall, light-motes take shapes  
Of vines with showers of emerald grapes.

“ Queen Venus is a toothless crone,  
Blackened with age ; all night alone

She lies, and no bird ever cries  
For the wild starlight of her eyes.”

“ Once Helen was Prince Paris' doxy ;  
She meets her lovers now by proxy,

And wrinkled as the gold sea-sand  
Are the breasts that once seemed heaven's  
land.”

“ Look at that little shadow . . . oh, the  
joy,  
As black as any jewelled negro boy.

O little shade—see, I will call him Zambo.  
Look where he silent sits and plays dumb-  
crambo

There at the door, with ghosts . . . and his  
mentero,  
Half in brocaded sunlight, points to Zero !

Black fingers stretched to pluck the fruits of  
gold  
Through the great leaves. . . . I feel a  
sudden cold

Sweet air from the arcade. . . . Again it  
goes.

The scented darkness seems as rich as snows,

Like cornucopias with ostrich plumes  
And great gold fruits, the clouds seem from  
these glooms.”

Down in the great arcade of the courtyard  
The fairies' coachmen, tawny as a pard,

Are talking of those feathered July eves  
When all these dames desert their country  
leaves

(Though still as lovely as those moonlight  
maids

Juno and Dian, haunting their deep glades)—

And in their coach, with maids and foot men,  
drive

Up to the great town houses where they live ;

No longer they seem fairies, but we see  
Them named as the old Duchess of Bohea

And Madam Cards, the Marchioness of Gout ;  
Though they are old, they still enjoy a rout,

And through the dark leaves of the shadow-  
grove,

As wickedly as ever, eyes still rove

That dealt death from behind a fluttered fan  
In Pompeii, Athens, before Time began.

In courtyards stained with the black night  
like wine,

Strange figures with hair lifted like a vine

Listen. . . . Who is it hearkens at their doors,  
In the vast rooms and endless corridors ?

It is goat-footed, mincing Death, who presses  
His muzzle at the keyhole, hears their dresses

Rustling like rose-leaves. . . . They hit him  
with their fan,  
Through scented moonlight move to their  
sedan.

When the hot gilded day will reach  
A restful close,  
A Japanese dwarf forest on the beach,  
With dark trees of the shadow, the street  
grows.

How sand-like quivers the gold light  
Under the large black leaves of shadow ;  
mirage-bright  
It lies, that dusty gold,  
Untouched of any air,  
Like Dead-Sea fruit carved in cornelian, bold  
The faces of a man and Pleasure's mournful  
daughter

Show lovely in the light, a moment flare,  
Then shadows fall again—dark agates through  
clear water.

Then these Chinoiseries, old ghosts of red and  
white

Smooth lacquer in their palanquins take  
flight

For tea and the last esoteric rage  
Whose plumes may soften age, that harpy's  
cage.

Their smile is like Death's trap . . . a little  
gilded dust

Of valueless beauty from the sun, soon must

Brush for a fading while each feathered cheek  
That paradisal airs will never sleek,—

And round them, as they move, the unfading  
sea Eternity

With its cool feathered airs of beauty, sighs,  
of no horizons they can see.

What would these ghosts do, if the truths  
they know,

That were served up like snow-cold jewelled  
fruits

And the enfeathered airs of lutes,  
Could be their guests in cold reality ?

They would be shivering,  
Wide-eyed as a negro king



Seeing the evanescent mirage snow,—  
They would be silenced by the cold  
That is of the spirit, endlessly  
Unfabled and untold.

The swan's breath winter these have known  
    is finer  
Fading than the early snows of China,

The poems of Queen Marguerite of Navarre,  
(Narcissus-petalled, perfumed like a star)

Or the Pleiades' citron-scented poems, fading  
    like the snows,  
Perfuming their long fingers till their eyelids  
    close.

The winters these have known have been too  
    kind,  
With skies that seemed the bitter gilded rind

Of unattainable fruits ; small women go  
As white as ermines, and small winds are slow

As tunes upon a lute ; the point-lace on the  
    trees

And the pearl-berries of the snow upon dark  
    bushes freeze,

And the snow falls, as sharp and bright,  
unripe and sour  
As the budding grapes' bright perfume, or  
the sweet grape-flower.

The daughters of the Silence now are dead,  
And these Chinoiserie ghosts,  
These mummies in dim hosts,  
Tread the long mournful avenues instead,  
Alarm the soul by their cold interest—  
For what can be the purpose of their quest ?

When spring begins, in China and Thibet  
Through belled lime-avenues a springe is set  
To catch the softly-smiling wind,  
The cherubim to catch and blind  
As cruel men blind a singing-bird ;  
They trap them with the sound of lutes  
And the softest smiles of fruits,  
That these old ghosts may prove the  
feathered creatures real to hold,  
And make them sing upon a perch of gold  
In cages with a foolish bell-hung gable  
Amid the powders on their dressing-table.  
Till, trapped by our mortality, they die, and  
their small bones,  
Sounding as sweetly as the west wind's tones,

Are sold because they sound like a small  
music-box.

Their slayers sell for silver the bright  
plumes in flocks,

To make the pillows for a sleepy head

That never dreams of heaven, but the lonely  
Dead.

And still they dwindle the bright world down  
to the gilded glooms

Of dust, these mummies, hieing, harrying fast  
The Soul, their quarry, through the deserted  
tombs—

Or lying, lotus-eaters in a dreamful ease,  
Perfuming their cold lips with silence and the  
past

Beneath the Asian darkness of smooth  
trees. . . .”

Thus spoke the men ; then sleep came colder  
than the rose

Blooming in desolation. . . . No one knows  
The end there is to dust—it is the soul that  
shall survive them at the last.

## XVIII

BENEATH a wan and sylvan tree  
Whose water-flowing beauty our tired eyes  
Can feel from very far, two travellers lie.  
And one is swarthy as the summer wind,—  
A man who travelled from a far countree ;  
The other Soldan in his pomp and panoply  
Seems like le Roi Soleil in all his pride  
When his gold periwig is floating wide.  
They talked together, those dark kings  
    beneath the bough,  
And their songs mingled with soft winds that  
    flow.

THE SOLDAN (*sings*)

“ When green as a river was the barley,  
Green as a river the rye,  
I waded deep and began to parley  
With a youth whom I heard sigh.  
‘ I seek,’ said he, ‘ a lovely lady,  
A nymph as bright as a queen,  
Like a tree that drips with pearls her shady  
Locks of hair were seen ;  
And all the rivers became her flocks  
Though their wool you cannot shear,  
Because of the love of her flowing locks.

The kingly sun like a swain  
Came strong, unheeding of her scorn,  
Wading in deeps where she has lain,  
Sleeping upon her river lawn  
And chasing her starry satyr train.  
She fled, and changed into a tree,—  
That lovely fair-haired lady. . . .  
And now I seek through the sere summer  
Where no trees are shady ! ’

They say that Daphne never was more  
fair  
With all the shaken pearls of her long hair—  
The lovely tree that was Apollo’s love,  
To whom he brought his richest spoils—  
than she !  
And oh, that other Soldan, the hot sun  
Burns not with love as I, with my dark  
pomp,  
My helmet thick-plumed as a water-god’s,  
Whose cornucopia filled with dripping jewels  
Is not so rich as treasures I bear—  
Dark spices, nard and spikenard, amber-  
gris . . .  
No maid will change into a tree before my  
kiss ! ”



## THE MAN FROM A FAR COUNTREE

“ But I will be content with some far-lesser  
maid,  
Who feeds her flocks beneath a fair-haired tree  
And listens to the wind’s song ; she shall be  
My soldanesse, and rule my far countree.

*(Sings)*

Rose and Alice,  
Oh, the pretty lassies  
With their mouths like a calice  
And their hair a golden palace—  
Through my heart like a lovely wind they  
blow.

Though I am black and not comely,  
Though I am black as the darkest trees,  
I have swarms of gold that will fly like honey-  
bees,  
By the rivers of the sun I will feed my words  
Until they skip like those fleecèd lambs  
The waterfalls, and the rivers (horned rams),  
Then for all my darkness I shall be  
The peacefulness of a lovely tree—  
A tree wherein the golden birds  
Are singing in the darkest branches, oh ! ”

Thus sang these plumed kings, and the winds  
that flow  
Whispered of lands no waking heart may  
know.

## XIX

Now from the silk pavilions of the seas  
The nymphs sing, gold and cold as orange-  
trees :

“ Through gilded trellises  
Of the heat, Dolores,  
Inez, Manuccia,  
Isabel, Lucia,  
Mock Time that flies.

‘ Lovely bird, will you stay and sing,  
Flirting your sheenèd wing,—  
Peck with your beak, and cling  
To our balconies ? ’

They flirt their fans, flaunting—

‘ O silence enchanting  
As music ! ’ then slanting

Their eyes

Like gilded or emerald grapes

They take mantillas, capes,

Hiding their simian shapes.

Sighs

Each lady, ‘ Our spadille

Is done.’ . . . ‘ Dance the quadrille

From Hell’s towers to Seville,

Surprise

Their siesta,' Dolores  
Said. Through gilded trellises  
Of the heat, spangles  
Pelt down through the tangles  
Of bell-flowers ; each dangles  
Her castanets, shutters  
Fall while the heat mutters,  
With sounds like a mandoline  
Or tinkled tambourine. . . .  
Ladies, Time dies ! ”

And petals of the foam, like perfumed orange-  
blossom,  
Pelt the nymphs singing in their bowers—  
cold as their bosom.

## XX

IN the hot noon like glowing muscadine  
The light seems, and the shade like golden  
wine.

Beneath the deep shade of the trees' arcade,  
All foppish in his dressing-gown's brocade

And turban, comes the great Magnifico,  
And hearkens not where the becafico

Time taps at the lovely sylvan trees.  
Now underneath the shadows fallen from  
these

The queen sits with her court, and through  
the glade  
The light from their silks casts another silver  
shade.

Home goes the great Magnifico, his dressing-  
gown  
Is changed for water-rustling silks that  
drown

The shades, and walking proudly as the breeze  
Now he advances through the sylph-slim  
trees.



“Madam, the Soldan and the King of  
Ethiop’s land  
Approach as suitors for your daughter’s  
hand.”

The day grew water-pale and cool as eves. . .  
A lady sang through water-rippling leaves :

“The mauve summer rain  
Is falling again—  
It soaks through the eaves  
And the ladies’ sleeves—  
It soaks through the leaves

That like silver fish fall  
In the fountains, recall  
Afternoons when I  
Was a child small and shy  
In the palace. . . . Fish lie

On the grass with lives darkling.  
Our laughter falls sparkling  
As the mauve raindrops bright  
When they fall through the light  
With the briefest delight.

The pavilions float  
On the lake like a boat. . . .  
Mauve rains from trees fall  
Like wysteria flowers . . . all  
My life is like this  
And drifts into nothingness !

The strange ladies sigh  
' The autumn is nigh ' . . .  
The King bows and mutters. . . .  
His eyelids seem shutters  
Of a palace pavilion  
Deserted a million

Echoing years ago.

. . . . .  
Oh, but the rain falls slow."

But no one heard the great Magnifico  
Or this pale song, for underneath the low  
Deep bough the queen slept, while the flowers  
that fall  
Seemed Ariadne's starry coronal.

## XXI

IN the great room above the orangery  
The old queen's dwarfs are drinking their  
bohea

While the thin flames seem gold and whisper-  
ing leaves  
Of trees in the Hesperides, whose faint  
sound grieves.

So small they could be hid in a pomander  
Miss Ellen and Sir Pompey Alexander

Seem . . . the tea is gold as evening,  
The perfumes in the orangery sing,

And, flashing like exotic-plumaged birds,  
The lovely shadows whisper unknown words.

Upon the wall, the portrait of Queen Anne  
Frowned at them, and waved a languid  
fan,—

Queen Anne, whose white wig glittering in  
the net  
Of gold light seems a florid bergerette

Sheep-floury underneath the powder . . .  
Her lips' small strawberry said " Louder "

To the shadows' fluttering bird . . .  
But the lovely one scarce heard. . . .

The zephyrs' lips like ruffled roses sleek  
Caressingly each faintly upturned cheek ;

And now the shutters like blue water  
Fall . . . where is the King's daughter ?

The candle-flames seem orange-flowers  
Whose pale light falls in perfumed showers ;

But Queen Anne, sleeping on the wall,  
Long dead, would answer not at all.

## XXII

THE little golden lights like Chinese ladies  
    peep  
Through the old queen's curtains, then like  
    sleep

Their gentle footsteps fade again and fail,  
And once again the world is ghostly pale.

In the queen's powder-closet, Mrs. Troy  
Teases the flames to wake them and annoy . . .

So pale are those thin ghostly flames that yet  
They seem like the old notes of a spinet

That sometimes sounds a courrante or  
    gavotte  
By Mozart or Scarlatti—sometimes not—

While the pale silken ribbons of the rain,  
Knotted, are fluttering down the window-  
    pane.

But suddenly the flames turn green and red  
As unripe fruit ; their shrilling fills her head



With noises like a painted puppet-show ;  
And in that music, shrieking high and low,

Dead is the pointed flames' small minuet—  
And from the shrilling fire leaps Laidronette.

The ghostly apparition that appeared  
Wagged from her chin a cockatrice's beard ;

She crouches like a flame, the adder-sting  
Of her sharp tongue is ready ; hear her sing :

“ The candle flames bob  
Like strawberries low,  
Bobcherry, bobcherry,  
See them go  
In the hands of the queen's maids  
Under the trees  
Of the shadow, flickering in the breeze.  
Crept a starved and a humble air  
From the hovels, grunting with low pig-  
snout,—  
Starved thin, creeping  
Everywhere, weeping  
It blew the queen's strawberry candle-flames  
out.

The maids in long chequered gowns  
Hunting for these  
Find but the shadows'  
Flickering trees."

The humble ghosts like poppet maids  
Walk tiptoe in the shadow glades.

Their mouths seem small red strawberries ;  
Their naïve naiad titterings freeze

The airs in the long corridors  
Where they must hark at hopeless doors.

And Mrs. Troy rose up like a thin shriek  
Or pointed flame. . . . " Oh, my poor head  
is weak !

Oh dear,  
Oh dear,  
Whatever shall I do ?  
In the flames' shrill rout  
Laidronette slipped through.  
I forget the Latin  
For my prayer !

My quilted satin  
Is beyond repair !  
I must tell the queen—  
But I dare not be seen !  
Oh dear, oh dear,  
I tremble with fear  
Like a nectarine bough  
When the sun shines through.

How harmless has been my poor life—  
Yet when a young girl, I had strife !  
Out, alas ! how I remember  
That dawn when to light the ember  
I must steal and I must creep  
In the kitchen half asleep.  
Noises from the sharp green wood  
Burnt and bit my satyr blood,  
And my cockscomb hair raised ire  
In parrot whistlers in the fire !  
Now the ember as it dozes  
Seems lattices of bunchèd roses,  
Fuchsias and fat strawberries,  
Dahlias, cherries, and one sees  
Through those lattices' gold wire  
The parrot whistlers in the fire,  
Pecking cherries every one.

‘ Polly, put the kettle on,’  
Scream they ; ‘ scratch poor pretty Polly ’  
(Kettles hissing at their folly !).  
From the wood they spring and scream,  
Scald the milk, upset the cream, . . .  
Oh the feathers jewel-bright !  
Alas ! my life was never light.”

The shrill flames nodded, beckoned, then lay  
dead ;  
Her wig awry, cross Poll Troy nods her head.

The long dark corridors seem shadow-groves  
Wherein a little courtier air still roves. . . .

Pale rose-leaves, wet and scented, seems the  
rain,  
Whose bright drops cease, as soft as sleep  
again.

Her gown seems like a pale and tuneful rose,  
                  .                   .                   .                   .                   .  
Hours passed ; the soft melodious moonlight  
grows. . . .

A murmurous sound of far-off Circean seas  
And old enchantments and the growth of  
trees.

. . . . .  
Across the silver grass the powdered ghosts  
Are wandering in dim and scattered hosts

Among the woods and fields, and they forget  
Everything but that their love's hand yet

Is touching theirs ; the ribbons of the moon  
are blue

And pink ; those ghosts pick bunches from  
the dew

Of ghostly flowers all poignant with spring  
rain,

Smelling of youth that will not come again.



## XXIII

THE public Scribe, noctambulo,  
Where moonlight cold as blades of grass  
Echoes upon deserted walls  
Turned his dusty folio. . . .  
Dry grass that cackles thin in Hell  
The spires of fire . . . his nightcap fell. . . .

Doctor Gradus  
Mounts Parnassus  
On that dusty ass the Law.  
His hair is grey  
As asses' ears,  
The cold wind's bray  
He never hears. . . .  
O'er donkey's hide grass the attorney  
Still continues on his journey  
With the dusty Law's proceedings,  
Through the old forrestial readings  
For the Town of Troy  
Prince Paris lost when yet a boy.

Il Dottore in the long grass  
Culls the simples,—cold henbane,  
Nettles that make fevers pass,  
Wood-spurge that will cure a blain.

He walks where weeds have covered all. . . .  
The moon's vast echoes die  
Across the plain where weeds grown tall  
Pearled treasures of Asia seem,  
Sunk in an endless dream.

And the mandarins in Asia,  
In the silken palace of the moon,  
Are all who are left to drink this physic  
That will restore them from a swoon.

## XXIV

NIGHT passed, and in that world of leaves  
The Dawn came, rustling like corn-sheaves ;

And a small wind came like little boy blue  
Over the cornfield and rustling through  
The large leaves. . . . Oh, how very deep  
The old queen is sighing in her sleep :

“ Alas, blue wind,  
Bluebeard unkind,  
Why have you blown so far from me  
Through the jewelled blue leaves that sound  
like the sea,

The lady Margotte,  
The goosegirl Gargotte  
Agog with curiosity ?

They played Troy Town on the palace  
wall . . .

Like small grape hyacinths were their curls  
And thin as the spring wind were those girls—  
But now they never come if I call.”

The kingly cock with his red-gold beard  
And his red-gold crown had crowed unheard

While his queens ruffled down  
Their feathered gown  
Beside the waterfall's crystal town.

The cock, the dawn-fruits, the gold corn  
Sing this aubade, cold, forlorn :

“ Jane, Jane,  
Forget the pain  
In your heart. Go work again.

Light is given that you may  
Work till owl-soft dusk of day.

The morning light whines on the floor, . . .  
No one e'er will cross the door,

No one ever cares to know  
How ragged flowers like you do grow.

Like beaux and belles about the Court  
King James the Second held, athwart

The field the sheep run,—foolish graces,  
Periwigs, long Stuart faces,

While ragged robins' cockscomb flowers  
Cluck beneath the crystal showers.

A far-off huntsman sounds his horn  
That sounds like rain, harsh and forlorn ;

Pink as his coat, poor robin seems. . . .  
Jane, no longer lie in dreams.

The crude pink stalactites of rain  
Are sounding from the boughs again,

Each sighs the name of Harriet, Mary,  
Susan, Anne, grown cold and wary—

Never yours. Once, bright and gay,  
They used to whisper ' Come away,'

But now they have forgotten why.  
Come, no longer sleeping lie.

Jane, Jane,  
Forget the pain  
In your heart. Go work again ! ”



No answer came. No footsteps now will  
climb

Down from Jane's attic. She forgets the  
time,

Her wages, plainness, and how none could  
love

A maid with cockscomb hair, in Sleep's dark  
grove.

## XXV

AND now the brutish forests close around  
The beauty sleeping in enchanted ground.

All night, the harsh bucolic winds that  
    grunt  
Through those green curtains, help me in my  
    hunt.

Oh the swinish hairy beasts  
Of the rough wind  
(Wild boars tearing through the forests) !  
Nothing they will find

But stars like empty wooden nuts  
In leaves green and shrill.  
Home they go to their rough stye  
The clouds . . . and home go I.

Above the wooden shutters  
Of my room at morn,  
Like bunches of the country flowers  
Seem the fresh dawn hours.

And the young dawn creeps  
Tiptoe through my room, . . .  
Never speaks of one who sleeps  
In the forest's gloom.

## XXVI

THE gardener played his old bagpipe  
To make the melons and the peaches ripe. . . .  
The threads are mixed in a tartan sound . . .  
“ Keep, my lad, to the good safe ground.  
For Jonah long since was a felon  
With guineas gold as a grape or melon.  
He always said his prayers in Latin  
To peaches like red quilted satin ;  
And he had four and twenty daughters  
As lovely as the thick-fleeced waters  
Or the Hesperides’ thick-leaved trees—  
And they were lovely as the evening breeze.  
One Sabbath roamed that godless man  
Beneath the great trees sylvan wan,  
And met an ancient satyr crone  
Cold as the droning wind the drone  
Hears when the thickest gold will thrive  
Summer-long in the combs of the honey-  
hive.  
She said, ‘ You must cease to leeze and  
pheeze  
Your sheep as thick and as white as cheese.  
It is time you sailed, as I understand,  
To better yourself in a Better Land.’

The sea was sharper than green grass,  
The sailors would not let him pass,  
For the sea was wroth and rose at him  
Like the turreted walls of Jerusalem  
Or like the towers and gables seen  
In the midst of a deep-boughed garden green.  
If my old bagpipe I blew  
It would not blow those great towers down.  
The sailors took and bound him, threw  
Him in among those towers to drown.  
And oh, far best," the gardener said,  
" Like fruits to lie in your kind bed,  
To sleep as snug as in the grave  
In your kind bed, and shun the wave,  
Nor ever sigh for a strange land  
And songs no heart can understand."













